
**XIV. THE EARLIEST AMERICAN BOOK ON
KITCHEN GARDENING.**

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In his introduction to the bibliography of American horticultural literature in the *Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture*, L. H. Bailey has pointed out that the literature of gardening, as such, was very little developed in this country previous to the nineteenth century, though several gardeners' calendars, one of which is credited to the year 1752, are supposed to have been issued, mostly with local almanacs. Few of these calendars can now be identified, and very few, in all probability, are now extant, so it may never be known to what degree they have enriched the experimental knowledge of gardening in America. One of them, however, which is still in existence though chiefly known in its nineteenth-century editions, has been regarded as the earliest and possibly only original horticultural work of the eighteenth century: Robert Squibb's *The Gardener's Kalendar for South-Carolina, Georgia, and North-Carolina* (Charleston, 1787). Although in calendar form this is a work of considerable extent, and is said to have played an important part in the development of the art of gardening in the vicinity of Charleston; but beside this, and probably antedating it by at least 15 or 20 years, there is an equally important manual for the description and culture of garden vegetables. While the "Treatise on gardening, by a citizen of Virginia," as reprinted in the second edition of Gardiner and Hepburn's *American Gardener* (Georgetown, D. C., 1818), is the earliest form of the work now in existence, it has recently been shown by Alfred J. Morrison in the *William and Mary College Quarterly*² that it had previously been published at Richmond as early as 1793 or 1794, and there had apparently been yet earlier printings. The work is ascribed to John Randolph, jr. (1727-1784), the last King's attorney

¹ The credit for the rediscovery of the main facts in regard to authorship belongs to Mr. A. J. Morrison; my own study of the work, extending through some half dozen years, has been directed more particularly to defining the period in which it was written, its relation to other literature, and possible influence on the gardening tradition of its time.

² A *Treatise on Gardening by a Citizen of Williamsburg*. *William and Mary College Quarterly*, Vol. 25, (October, 1916), p. 138-139; also *The Gardener of Williamsburg*, Vol. 25, (January, 1917), pp. 166-167.

of Virginia, who, though a native Virginian, was one of the loyalists who went to England at the outset of the Revolution, dying there in 1784.

I have long and vainly tried to discover the date of the original issue of this book, which seems to have left no contemporary traces; but the evidence for Randolph's authorship, taken all together, is conclusive.

I. Thomas Jefferson, who was a contemporary of the attorney and on intimate terms with him, could hardly have referred to anyone else of the name when he credited the book to "John Randolph," as he did in more than one instance. In the Catalogue of the Library of the United States (Washington, 1815), which was the list arranged by himself of the books which the Government bought from Jefferson in 1814, we find on page 31 "A Treatise on gardening by John Randolph." No date is assigned, but it must have been the same copy which appears in the Library of Congress catalogue of 1840, page 129, as "Randolph, John: Treatise on gardening. 16s. Richmond, 1793." As the fire of December, 1851, destroyed the agricultural portion of the Library of Congress, this copy is of course no longer in existence. The work is likewise credited to John Randolph in the manuscript catalogue of Jefferson's library which is preserved at the Massachusetts Historical Society, and it appears to have been highly valued by Jefferson, as he included it among titles recommended for an agricultural library, March 3, 1817³, and there was another copy, not necessarily the same edition, among Jefferson's books which were sold at auction after his death, in February, 1829, but the entry in the auctioneer's catalogue⁴ gives no data in regard to the work, though it suggests the relation between this book and that of Gardiner and Hepburn as follows: "274. Hepburn's American Gardener; 275, Randolph's Treatise on Gardening; 276. Hepburn and Randolph."

II. In the *American Gardener* (Georgetown, 1818), page 268, there is a note by the editor, presumably Joseph Milligan, of Georgetown, who published this edition, stating that "The annexed little Treatise was written many years ago, by a learned and eminent citizen of Virginia * * * who printed it for the use of his friends, by whom it has been long and highly prized for the useful information it conveys * * * The residence of the author, and his garden, from which he drew his observations, were in Williamsburg, Virginia." If, as seems probable, this note was based on

³ *American Farmer*, Vol. 2, (1820), p. 94.

⁴ A catalogue of the extensive and valuable library of the late President Jefferson * * * to be sold at auction, at the Long Room, Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington City, by Nathaniel P. Poor. Washington, 1829.

personal knowledge, it gives strong support to the theory of Randolph's authorship.

III. A positive statement of the author's identity is made by Edmund Ruffin in the *Farmers' Register* for 1839⁵: "The author was John Randolph, of Williamsburg, attorney general under the colonial government." Ruffin calls it "the oldest Virginian work on cultivation, of any kind," but says that its date "is not shown by anything in the oldest edition which we have seen, which is as late as 1794." He reprints the entire work "in its original form, which was without the name of the author." Ruffin's statement carries great weight, as he was in a position to know at first hand, in 1839, many facts with regard to Virginia history and agriculture, which have been lost to memory in the four-score intervening years.

IV. The Massachusetts Horticultural Society has a copy of the *American Gardener* (1818), with the following note on page 269: "This treatise is by John Randolph, of Williamsburg, father of Edmund Randolph, Secretary of State during the administration of General Washington⁶." This is without date or signature, but while it is possible that it may have been written later, and perhaps based upon some other statement such as Ruffin's, the handwriting may be that of General Dearborn, in which case there is a strong probability that it is even earlier than Ruffin's, and founded upon quite as definite personal knowledge. Henry Alexander Scammell Dearborn (1783-1851) was the son of Gen. Henry Dearborn (1751-1829), who was Secretary of War in Jefferson's Cabinet, and, although the father was from Maine, the son entered the College of William and Mary at Williamsburg in 1801, graduating there in 1803, and afterwards studied law in Virginia with William Wirt. His interest in agricultural matters must have begun rather early, as we find him in 1816 publishing a translation of a French work on dye plants by Lasteyrie du Saillant, and thenceforth he was continually writing, speaking, and organizing in the interests of agriculture and gardening, being one of the prime movers and the first president of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. He was greatly interested in building up its library, and although it is not certain that the annotated copy of the *American Gardener* was his gift, it must have been the very one which was listed in the original catalogue published by him as chairman of the library committee in the *New England Farmer* in 1831. Nothing is more plausible than that the work of Randolph, perhaps in the form known to Jefferson, supposed to have been printed about 1793, may have been

⁵ Randolph's *Treatise on Gardening*. *Farmers' Register*, Vol. 7, (January, 1839), pp. 41-54.

⁶ *Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture*, ed. by L. H. Bailey, Vol. 3, (1915), p. 1579. *Sketch of David Hepburn*, by Wilhelm Miller.

in use in Williamsburg while Dearborn was a student there, thus furnishing the original basis for this note, though it is also conceivable that the information may have come by way of Jefferson.

V. In 1826 the *Treatise on Gardening* was reprinted at Richmond by Collins & Co. with the title: "Randolph's Culinary Gardener, enlarged and adapted to the present state of our climate, by an experienced gardener, a native of Virginia." The latter probably refers to the numerous additions by "M.," whom I have not been able to identify, and although the book is credited to "Mr. Randolph," it gives no hint of his identity, or to the date of the original issue, save the intimation that it must have been considerably previous to 1826. This reprint was advertised in the *Richmond Enquirer*, February 16, 1826, at the price of 50 cents per copy.

Besides the proofs of Randolph's authorship, it may be well to dispose of one or two obviously impossible attributions.

I. In printing a catalogue card for Gardiner and Hepburn's *American Gardener*, the Library of Congress originally indicated an added entry for the *Treatise on Gardening* under John Taylor (1750-1824), a rather reasonable assumption, as the latter's famous "Arator" essays were first published in 1813 under the soubriquet of "A Citizen of Virginia," but quite inconsistent with the previously quoted statement of the editor, in regard to the author's residence and garden in Williamsburg, which throws out Colonel Taylor, of Caroline. In this connection, moreover, it would have been quite as natural to credit the work to another writer who posed as a "Citizen of Virginia," i. e., Filippo Mazzei, a Florentine who was actually carrying on practical experiments in agriculture near Williamsburg at about the time the *Treatise on Gardening* was written, and whose "*Recherches Historiques sur les États Unis de l'Amérique Septentrionale* * * * par un Citoyen de Virginie" was published at Paris in 1788. However, apart from the fact that Mazzei could never have achieved the easy English of the *Treatise*, we can be sure that Jefferson, who knew both men intimately, would never have attributed his work to Randolph.

II. J. W. Randolph, the publisher and bookseller of Richmond, who had an extensive knowledge of Virginia, on more than one occasion advertised for sale a copy of the *Culinary Gardener* of 1826 under the name of Sir John Randolph (1693-1737), the father of John Randolph, jr., but this possibility is excluded by the fact that the book contains quotations from another work which was not published before 1752.

Inasmuch as the *Treatise* is based, so far as the account of the vegetables is concerned, upon Miller's *Gardener's Dictionary*, it is

most fortunate for our purposes that its author used an edition⁷ which in many respects is different from those which preceded or followed it. Certain statements in the *Virginian* work have been compared with 13 editions of Miller, and while some are to be found in earlier or later issues, it is only in the sixth folio of 1752, or its abridgement, published in 1754, that we can identify them all. One point of absolute difference is the date for sowing cauliflowers, quoted from Miller as the "10th or 12th of August." So far as I can discover, every edition prior to 1752 specifies that seed should be sown on the 10th of August, while in the seventh folio, published in 1759, Miller says "about the twenty-first of August," having previously explained that he has "in this edition, altered the days to the New Style"; and we find that the alternative dates "10th or 12th" appear only in the 1752 and 1754 editions. Again we find the "Citizen of Virginia" quoting Miller in regard to the Portugal or pocket melon, which "has been called by the name of King Charles' melon, because he used to carry one in his pocket, and also Dormer's melon, because brought from Portugal by a general of that name." Neither of these names occurs in any edition of Miller before the sixth folio, and while the "Dormer melon" is again mentioned in the seventh, the other name does not appear after the fourth abridgment in 1754.

Granting then, the theory that our book was the work of John Randolph, jr., we must assume that it was written between 1752, the date of Miller's sixth folio, and 1775, when Randolph left Virginia. Certain bits of internal evidence, moreover, suggest a further limitation of this period. The "Col. Ludwell" who gave the author seed of Aleppo lettuce, must have been Philip Ludwell, of Green Spring (1716-1767), third of that name and last of the Virginia Ludwells, who died in England in 1767, but had returned thither probably as early as 1761 or 1762, so that the exchange of garden seeds, which was fresh in Randolph's mind, must have been before that date. On the other hand, the author uses the past tense throughout his description of the method of "Col. Turner of King George, who was eminent for cauliflowers," suggesting that this was probably written after that gentleman's death. The allusion is undoubtedly to Thomas Turner, who died in 1758, and who is mentioned by Washington in his diary, January 14, 1760, when on his way to Port Royal he passed "the plantation late Col^o Turners." Another bit of internal evidence which furnishes material for thought is the names of garden peas in the *Treatise*, which differ considerably from

⁷ Miller, Philip, *The Gardener's Dictionary*, 6th edition, London, 1752, F°. Also same, abridged from the last folio edition, by the author, 4th edition, London, 1754, 3 v., 8°.

those in Miller's Dictionary but resemble those of an advertisement of garden seeds in the Virginia Gazette in the springs of 1767 and 1768. I have examined a quantity of material, both contemporary and later publications, without finding any trace of the original edition of this book; but from the evidence submitted I venture the theory that it could hardly have been written previous to 1760 and probably not later than 1770, when Randolph, then in his early forties, would have had sufficient practical experience to test and pass upon the precepts of Philip Miller's *Gardeners' Dictionary*. We have not the slightest clue to the form of the original publication, which may either have been printed on some local press in a very limited edition for circulation among friends of the author, or possibly issued as a supplement to the Virginia Gazette. I have wondered if the abbreviation "p. f." which follows the title in the manuscript catalogue of Jefferson's library previously referred to might not have signified "pamphlet folio." This would have been appropriate if it had been printed in the Gazette, as was some other matter of economic interest, like the essays on the cultivation of the vine, by Robert Bolling, jr., which are still extant, and a paper on the fly weevil by Col. Landon Carter, of Sabine Hall, which according to his statement in a similar paper in the first volume of the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, had been printed "in our gazettes," but even then, in 1768, was impossible to get hold of. It may be noted that while they regarded imported books with respect, the colonists seem to have been remarkably careless about preserving the product of their own presses; and whether as a tiny separate booklet or a large ungainly sheet, neither Carter's nor Randolph's work would have had much chance of survival; and the latter, at any rate, is not to be found in the most extensive file known—which is nevertheless far from complete—of the Virginia Gazette.

One feature of Randolph's work should be specially noted; whereas all the other early American gardening books, Squibb, McMahon, Gardiner and Hepburn, and the *Practical Gardener*, published by Fielding Lucas at Baltimore in 1819, are in the calendar form, showing what operations are to be performed "monethly throughout the year," Randolph takes up the subject from the point of view of the plants cultivated, which in the editions known to me are arranged, not under their Latin names, as in the *Gardener's Dictionary*, but in an alphabetical order of English common names, though the latter are usually followed by their Latin or Greek derivations, apparently taken direct from Miller's work.

The most important thing about the book, apart from the problem of its authorship, is that while many of the agricultural writings of that period were mere compilations from previous works, this little

volume⁸ bears frequent testimony to the author's personal observation and experience. Randolph's reliance on Miller's Dictionary is much in evidence, but it does not prevent him from forming and expressing his individual opinion; witness his remarks (p. 67) on the "netted wrought melon," which Miller "does not esteem, though I have found them very delicious in this country." Again he says (p. 67):

There is a rough knotty melon called the Diarbekr, from a Province belonging to the Turkish Empire, in Asia which is reckoned the most exquisite of all melons, which have been brought to great perfection here, and which are not taken notice of by Miller, probably because it has been brought into England since the publication of his dictionary, unless it is the Zatta.

Unhappily I have been unable to trace the introduction of the Diarbekr melon into either English or American gardens, or to identify it with the Zatte, apparently a very old name. We often find Randolph quoting Miller in comparison with his own experience, or, for information outside the range of his personal knowledge, as (p. 76) Miller's opinion in regard to the identity of the Ciboule and Welch onion, and (p. 79) the probability that the Chives and the Shallot are not distinct species.

The difference in climate between London and Virginia is noted by him, as (p. 35):

Miller says that for spring cauliflowers the seed should be sown on the 10th or 12th of August, but in Virginia, the 12th day of September is the proper time, which is much the same as in England, allowing for the difference of climate, the ratio of which ought to be a month sooner in the spring, and the same later in the fall; our summer months being intensely hot in this place.⁹

On the other hand, Randolph observes (p. 94) that the severity of the Virginia winters is too great to permit growing radishes out of doors, as practiced by the gardeners about London.

Nor were Randolph's observations strictly limited to his own garden, as indicated by his allusion (p. 37) to the method of "Col. Turner of King George, who was eminent for cauliflowers," though it had apparently succeeded with him also. He tried the Aleppo lettuce

⁸ The page references which follow have been made from the *Culinary Gardener* (1826), which while in some respects the least satisfactory, is the only edition in separate form; the alphabetical arrangement, moreover, makes it easy to identify any reference either in Gardiner and Hepburn's *American Gardener* (1818), or in the *Farmers' Register* Vol. 7, (1839), pp. 41-54.

⁹ Jefferson, in his *Notes on Virginia*, says that Williamsburg is in the hottest part of the State. The interest shown by the early Virginians in meteorological conditions is quite remarkable, and some of the available data must be important. For the vicinity of Williamsburg there are not only observations made by Jefferson during the years 1772-1775, but there is a calendar of the weather for the year 1759, made by Lieut. Gov. Francis Fauquier (1704-1768), which is appended to Andrew Burnaby's *Travels Through the Middle Settlements of North America* (London, 1775).

which Colonel Ludwell had given him (p. 66), "but it did not please me so well as the other more common sorts." Under the turnip, of which he quaintly remarks that it "will not apple kindly"¹⁰ after the middle of August, he states (p. 106) that "Lord Townsend (sic) sowed an acre in drills and worked it with the plough," etc., referring to "Turnip" Townshend (Charles, second Viscount Townshend, 1674-1738), who, on his retirement from political life in 1730, experimented with the cultivation of turnips on a large scale at his estate of Raynham, in Norfolk. Though the source of his information on Townshend's experiments was undoubtedly Miller's Dictionary, it seems that Randolph's reading was not entirely confined to that work, as he quotes (p. 18) Bradley's opinion that an asparagus bed, if properly managed, ought to last for 20 years¹¹ as compared with Miller's, that it should be good for 10 or 12.

Randolph in general throws little light on the varieties of vegetables in use in his time, but under peas (pp. 83-85) he mentions several of the old names, "Charlton Hotspur, Reading Hotspur, and Master Hotspur" (all given in Miller's Dictionary)—which he says are "very little differing from one another"—the "Rouncivals, the Spanish Marollo Peas and the Marrow Fat, or Dutch Admiral"; while farther on he states that "the Ormonds are the Hotspur." One can not but wonder if he bought his garden seeds from "William Wills, Chirurgion in Richmond Town, and John Donlevy in Petersburg," who advertised in the Virginia Gazette of March 26 and April 2, 1767: "Fresh imported from London and Bristol * * * Pease: Golden Hotspur, Early Charlton, Early Ormond, Marrowfat, Sugar Blues, Blue Rounceval, Dutch Admiral, Nonpareil do., Spanish Morattoes, Large Saletine." The next year their advertisement in the Gazettes of March 10 and 17, 1768, was varied chiefly in its spelling: "Early Golden Hotspur, Early Charlton, Ormeret Hotspur, Large Blue and White Rouncevals, Spanish Morotoes, Large Marrowfats, Nonpareils, Bunch, Sugar Blues, Dutch Admirals, Salatine," etc.

Mr. Morrison found this little book lacking in local color, which is of course due to its thoroughly practical, not to say prosaic, character, which leaves little room for "atmosphere" or those bits of local history dear to the heart of the antiquarian; it aimed to be, and succeeded as a practical manual of vegetable gardening for the author's

¹⁰ This use of the term "apple," meaning to fill out, is used with reference to the turnip by Miller and other writers of the period.

¹¹ Bradley, Richard, *New Improvements of Planting and Gardening*, [1st ed.] Vol. 3, (London, 1718), p. 144. Same in 6th edition, (London, 1731), p. 292.

own locality and period, but leaves us entirely ignorant of his personality.

It is practically impossible, moreover, to reconstruct anything of that personality from other sources. Those who have attempted it, like Conway and Miss Katherine Wormeley, Randolph's great-granddaughter, who cherished a few family traditions, have only succeeded in presenting generalities, while the actual documents relate only to his legal or political career, his activities (most obnoxious to many of his countrymen) in connection with the "writs of assistance," and his opposition to Patrick Henry's resolutions on the stamp act, or occasionally an opinion on a land title or other legal matter. Wirt in his *Life of Patrick Henry* stresses the idea that Randolph was the most brilliant lawyer of Virginia in his time, undoubtedly with the object of throwing into high relief the peculiar genius of Henry, who in many respects excelled him. Then one finds a few records indicating the conspicuous position of Randolph and his family in Virginia society, as when Col. Landon Carter, of Sabine Hall, notes in his diary (Nov. 21, 1770), that "Col. John Randolph & his Lady & daughters dined here on Monday," or Washington's diary (Aug. 4, 1774) records during a stay in Williamsburg: "Dined at the Attorney's & spent the evening at my own Lodgings." The actual records of John Randolph's life are meager. The son of Sir John Randolph, who is said to have been the only native American ever knighted, he was born in Williamsburg in 1727 (according to some in 1728). He was graduated from the College of William and Mary, and went to England to study law, being admitted to Middle Temple April 18, 1745, and called to the bar February 9, 1749. He returned to Williamsburg to practice, and, like his father, Sir John, and his son Edmund, who was Attorney General in Washington's administration, he was an able lawyer, and in 1766 was appointed to the post of King's attorney for Virginia, which had been held by his father and his elder brother Peyton. Unlike that brother, who was a conspicuous patriot, John Randolph was a staunch loyalist, and leaving Virginia in August of 1775, took his wife and daughters to England, where he spent the remainder of his life in poverty and obscurity. He died in Brompton January 31, 1784, but his wish to be buried in his native Virginia was fulfilled and his remains were brought back and placed beside those of his father and brother Peyton beneath the college chapel of William and Mary. His daughter Ariana, who performed this filial service, was the wife of James Wormeley, also a Virginia loyalist, a descendant of Ralph Wormeley, of Rosegill; and their son Ralph Randolph Wormeley afterwards became a Rear Admiral in the Royal Navy.

History is silent as to John Randolph's interest in gardening or his work as an author,¹² although he is mentioned as a man of literary tastes; and it is somewhere stated that he inherited the fine library collected by his father, to which he probably made large additions. A number of his books came into the hands of his friend, Thomas Jefferson, and there is good reason to suppose that a list¹³ of about 300 works in some 670 volumes, which was advertised for sale in the *Virginia Gazette* of November 25, the very day on which the effects of the attorney general were to be sold at auction by his trustees,¹⁴ must have been part of his library. While this list includes Miller's *Gardeners' Kalendar* and Bradley on Husbandry and Gardening, it does not comprise any edition of Miller's *Dictionary*, which may, however, have passed already into the hands of others; there seems to be no evidence that Jefferson ever owned a copy of this work. Even though the original issue of the little book which John Randolph is said to have "printed for the use of his friends" may never come to light, there remains the thrilling possibility that some newly discovered copy of the *Gardeners' Dictionary* may sometime reveal the original observations which he made upon his Williamsburg garden a century and a half ago.

¹² He is also credited with the authorship of two other books, no more definitely if as well proven as that of the *Treatise on Gardening*. One is the *Considerations on the Present State of Virginia*, a rare political tract printed in 1774, and reprinted in 1919 with notes by E. G. Swem, as one of C. F. Heartman's *Historical Series*; while the other is the famous *Letters from General Washington to Several of His Friends in the Year 1776* (London, J. Bew, 1777), which has been many times reprinted; and there is a specially good edition in 1889, with a full bibliography and discussion of the authorship by W. C. Ford. I have examined both works with more or less care, but fail to find any evidences of a common literary style.

¹³ *Virginia Gazette*, No. 1268, Nov. 25, 1775; reprinted in *William and Mary College Quarterly*, Vol. 15, (October, 1906), pp. 101-113.

¹⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, No. 1266, Nov. 11, 1775.